



ASHA /

Preventing Speech and Language Disorders



Keep your communication in top form

- Tips for preventing
 - speech sound disorders
 - stuttering
 - voice disorders
 - language disorders



Speech sound disorders

- Signs include
 - substituting one sound for another (wabbit for rabbit)
 - leaving sounds out of words (winnow for window)
 - changing how sounds are made, called distortions



Speech sound disorder prevention tips

- Talk, read, and play with your child every day.
 - Children learn sounds and words by hearing and seeing them.
- Take care of your child's teeth and mouth.
- Have your child's hearing checked.
- Have your child's speech screened at a local clinic or school.



Stuttering

- Many children may stutter sometimes. This is normal and should go away.
- Signs of stuttering include
 - repeating sounds at the beginning of words (“b-b-bball”)
 - pausing while talking
 - stretching sounds out (“sssssssnake” for “snake”)
 - saying “um” or “uh” a lot while talking



Stuttering prevention tips

- Give your child time to talk.
- Try not to interrupt your child while he or she is speaking.
- Have your child tested by a speech-language pathologist (SLP) if you are worried.



Voice disorders

Signs include

- hoarse, breathy, or nasal-sounding voice
- speaking with a pitch that is too high or too low
- talking too loudly or too softly
- easily losing your voice



Voice disorders prevention tips

- Try not to shout or scream, or to talk in noisy places.
- Drink plenty of water.
 - Water keeps the mouth and throat moist.
- Avoid alcohol, caffeine, chemical fumes (such as from cleaning products), and smoking.
- See a doctor if you have allergies or sinus or respiratory infections.



Language disorders

Signs include

- problems understanding what others are saying
- problems saying words and sentences
- having a small vocabulary
- having trouble thinking of words
- problems with reading and writing



More about language disorders

- A person with a language disorder may also have problems knowing how to speak to other people, such as
 - always interrupting
 - standing too close to others when speaking
- A person with a language disorder may use language that isn't right for the listener and situation, such as
 - speaking to adults and children in the same way
 - using slang during a job interview



Language disorder prevention tips

In children

- talk and read with your child
- have your child's hearing checked regularly
- learn about speech and language development
- don't drink or use drugs while you are pregnant
- be sure that your child uses a helmet and seat belt to prevent accidents that cause brain injury



Language disorder prevention tips

- Language disorders in adults are often caused by brain injury or stroke.
- Reduce risk factors for stroke by
 - stopping smoking
 - keeping your blood pressure down
- Use helmets and seat belts to prevent brain injury.



Prevention quiz for children and adults

1. Do you try not to scream or shout a lot?
2. Do you drink water during the day?
3. Do you exercise regularly and watch your diet?
4. Do you have your blood pressure checked every year?
5. Have you stopped smoking (or never smoked)?
6. Do you always wear a seatbelt when you are in the car and a helmet when you are biking, rollerblading, or skateboarding?



Prevention quiz for caregivers

1. Do you spend time talking and reading with your child every day?
2. Do you take your child to the doctor and dentist for regular checkups?
3. Do you know about speech and language development and what to expect?
4. Do you make sure your child always wears a seat belt in the car and a helmet when biking, rollerblading, or skateboarding?
5. Do you have your child's hearing checked every year?



Next steps

- If you answered “NO” to any questions, you can make simple changes to prevent speech and language disorders.



Speech-language pathologists can help

- Speech-language pathologists, also called SLPs, help prevent speech and language disorders.
- SLPs can test you or your child if you are worried.
- Have questions? Ask an SLP.



How to find an SLP

- Look for an SLP with
 - a master's or doctoral degree
 - the Certificate of Clinical Competence from ASHA (will have “CCC-SLP” after his or her name)
 - a state license, where required



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For more information

- Go to ASHA's Web site at www.asha.org
- Call ASHA at (800) 638-8255
- e-mail actioncenter@asha.org